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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ACCRA 002273

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SUBJECT: RECENT NARCOTICS ARREST HAS GHANAIAN DRUG BARONS
WORRIED

REF: ACCRA 2244

Classified By: CHARGE SUE K. BROWN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Ghanaian criminal community is reeling after the well-publicized October 22 arrest of two Afghan nationals for narcotics trafficking (reftel), according to police and other contacts. Contacts have said the drug "barons" were very surprised to learn that DEA was actively conducting undercover operations in Ghana. The Ghanaian media has carried the story in print and on television and some opposition parties have seized on the arrests to attack the ruling National Patriotic Party. However, the President's Office was personally involved in overseeing the handling of the case and the GOG performed well in the suspects' arrest and ensuing expulsion. The suspects, escorted by three DEA agents and one GOG official, departed Accra on October 24, had a seamless transfer through Amsterdam, and will arrive in Virginia on the afternoon of October 25. They are scheduled to be arraigned October 26.
END SUMMARY.

12. (C) In the last few days, police and other contacts have told us that the arrest and subsequent expulsion of the two Afghan nationals for suspected narcotics trafficking (reftel) has sent shockwaves through the Ghanaian criminal community. Contacts reported that criminals were surprised to learn that the DEA was actively conducting undercover investigations in Ghana. Contacts reported that criminals are particularly alarmed at the speed of the GOG's movement in expelling the suspects and handing them over to the U.S. Criminal elements expressed their shock over "Section 959", and, according to our contacts, were unaware that they could be deported to the U.S. and tried under U.S. law for crimes committed outside the U.S. (NOTE: 21 USC Sec. 959 applies to manufacturers or distributors of narcotics outside the U.S. who intend to sell narcotics in the U.S. Persons caught violating the statute may be tried in the U.S. END NOTE.) Police and other contacts added that other Ghanaian drug "barons" knew Nasrullah Safiullah but called him "Yama." The contacts said that "Yama" supplied several barons in Accra and these individuals are hiding, afraid Yama will talk. The suspects appeared to have long contacts with the area, disclosing at one point that they had learned English from West Africans.

13. (C) Media reaction has been significant. The GOG held a

press conference on October 22 to announce the arrests and major local dailies Daily Graphic and Ghanaian Times carried short articles with pictures of the suspects on their front pages the following day. The arrests and pictures of the suspects were also aired on state television. Some opposition parties have seized on the arrests to argue that President Kufuor's government has been unable to control the borders or combat narcotics.

14. (C) The GOG acted responsibly and effectively throughout the operation. However, it is important to note that information concerning the case was only shared with a few very select officials due to security concerns. According to GOG contacts, President Kufuor was personally involved in the case, ordering close cooperation and frequently asking personal secretary Ambassador D.K. Osei for updates. The Ghana Police operations team handled the arrest smoothly and the normally slow GOG bureaucracy, with prodding from the President's office, moved quickly with the expulsion, completing the paperwork in a day and a half. The detention of the suspects also went smoothly, although Nasrullah Safiullah refused to eat for several hours before giving in to his hunger.

15. (C) The suspects, looking tired and worried, departed Accra the evening of October 24 via Amsterdam with a heavily armed Ghana police escort taking them through the VIP lounge for an early boarding of the flight. Both suspects appeared to finally grasp the gravity of their situation at this point and said they were ready to cooperate and provide information on their contacts. The suspects, escorted by three DEA agents and one Ghana Police official, entered Amsterdam without incident and the

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transfer to the U.S. bound flight was without incident. The suspects are scheduled to arrive at Dulles on October 25 in the afternoon. They will be arraigned before a federal judge in the Eastern District of Virginia on October 26.

16. (C) COMMENT: This case appears to be the first time the 959 statue has been used in Africa, and it is not surprising to receive reports that local drug barons are seeking cover and caught off guard to learn of DEA activities in Accra. Should "Yama" provide useful information regarding the activities of Ghanaian traffickers, it remains to be seen how effectively the GOG will react if given specific actionable information about Ghanaian drug barons. While the GOG worked well on this case, it is significant that only a small number of senior officials were kept fully informed of the operation. END COMMENT.
BROWN